

Arc of Denver, Inc.

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Arc of Denver Inc.

Membership has always been the most valued aspect of our association, 2008 for reasons good and bad, has made us even more acutely aware of our place in the community. Because of our Board, Staff and Volunteers, we've made inroads to the medical community, the mental health community, organizations providing services to homeless people and the business community. As our scope broadens, our advocacy and systems change work becomes more robust and effective. The current economy is taking its toll on everyone and intensifies the need for advocacy and good public policy.

We are thrilled that The CO Health Foundation has extended our grant to improve health care access and identify gaps in the systems for people with intellectual disabilities as well as a user friendly data base. This allows Jenny Archibald and Lizabeth Foster to continue their excellent work.

Ian Watlington, advocate for Children and families, graduated from the Denver Metro Chamber of Commerce Leadership Institute this summer. Kris Bomgaars is on contract to pinch hit for Ian and is triaging the requests for advocacy for children.

Angela Van Manen works hard to help and advocate for services for those young adults who are in transition from school to work and community participation.

Tony Sears and Ken Dwenger to carry the lion's share of advocacy for adults. It's not uncommon for either one of them to have upward of 60 files opened at one time.

Great Fay has recently joined us as our office manager. Joining Greta is Colleen Lade who is our accountant

Gloria Martinez is the friendly face at the front desk on the phone and is a clerical assistant.

Collectively we work on 18 committees or work groups outside of, or facilitated by the Arc of Denver. The systems change work that we do is driven the individual advocacy challenges we experience.

- We are active on issues involving the state government and the legislature. Education reform is essential at all levels.
- The State Department of Human Services rewrote the rule defining eligibility in August presenting some real potential challenges to some people who don't meet the IQ standard. There is a work group to address the issue and we are hopeful that a broader definition may be the result.
- Long Term and Acute Health Care continues to require expansion and improvement of current practices.
- With new governments and all of the current socioeconomic issues we all are facing, we anticipate a very busy year

Michael Breeskin, a special education lawyer, runs our legal representation program

This program allows parents of children with individual education plans that need legal help to have access to affordable legal representation on a sliding scale basis.

Our Board of Directors is our heart and soul. They make brave decisions based on the needs of people with disabilities and have the wisdom to steer us in the direction of where we need to be in the community.

Arc of Denver, Inc. is a membership association dedicated to advocating with and empowering people with developmental disabilities and their families to participate fully in community life.

The Arc of Arapahoe & Douglas

Advocacy & Support for People with Developmental Disabilities

The Arc of Arapahoe and Douglas has been providing advocacy, information and support to people with developmental disabilities and their families since 1955. We are a non-profit membership organization and offer assistance to people in Arapahoe and Douglas counties (excluding the City of Aurora with is supported by another chapter) mostly free of charge. Over 80% of our funding comes from the Arc Thrift Stores; the rest is raised through membership, private donations and grant writing for specific projects.

Mission: *The Arc of Arapahoe and Douglas uses advocacy and education to include all children and adults with disabilities and their family members in their communities.* To achieve that mission our chapter focuses on three main programs:

1. Information and Referral
2. Advocacy – individual and system
3. Educational programs (scholarships available)

Through listening to our members and our community at large, our organization has focused 80% of our efforts on advocacy. Individual and systems advocacy in schools, the developmental disability systems for children and adults, the mental health system, employment and autism to reflect the needs of our community.

The remaining 20% of our effort is based in building capacity in our communities to enable children and adults with disabilities to live rich, full lives in their communities. We do this through three educational workshops for young adults with disabilities to enhance their understanding of social networks and community resources and two workshops for families to help them understand and negotiate the maze of systems that exist to support their children. (school-aged and adult transition)

Values: We believe in what Congress stated in the Reauthorization of the Rehabilitation Act.....
"disability is a natural part of the human experience and in no way diminishes the rights of individuals to live independently, enjoy self-determination, make choices, contribute to society, pursue meaningful careers, and enjoy full inclusion and integration in the economic, political, social, cultural and educational mainstream of American society."

Strategy: *Pulling together community resources, public policy, & educational opportunities to protect the rights of people with developmental disabilities and their families and enrich their lives.*

We wish to thank the Health and Human Services committee for their careful consideration of the many ways that our state can assist our citizens with disabilities to engage in and contribute to the community in which they live. As you know, the waiting list for services for people with developmental disabilities continues to be a huge problem for our state. The long-term health care needs of people with developmental disabilities cannot be ignored, because these needs do not go away, they simply get bigger, more complicated, and more expensive.

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